

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE
505 HUDSON STREET, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106

Michelle S. Cruz, Esq.
State Victim Advocate

**Testimony of Michelle Cruz, State Victim Advocate
Submitted to Transportation Committee
Wednesday, March 4, 2009**

Good afternoon Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrero and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. For the record, my name is Michelle Cruz and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of:

Committee Bill No. 152, An Act Prohibiting Open Alcoholic Beverage Containers in Motor Vehicles

Raised Senate Bill No. 1054, An Act Prohibiting Open Containers of Alcohol in Motor Vehicles

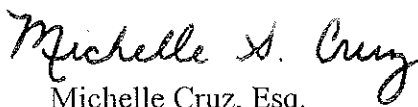
Every thirty minutes, one person dies from an alcohol related crash in the United States. In 2007, one hundred and one (101) people died in alcohol related crashes in Connecticut. For every victim of physical injury or death caused by an alcohol related crash, it is estimated that there are more than double the number of surviving family members. For the one hundred and one (101) people killed in 2007, there are well over two hundred surviving victims.

According to a Gallup poll, of the general driving population, ninety-eight percent (98%) perceive drinking and driving as a threat to their personal safety and eighty-six percent (86%) feel it is very important to do something to reduce the problem. Out of the 50 states, 43 have adopted laws to deter alcohol consumption within a motor vehicle by enacting similar statutes, four of which have a partial open container law. Sadly, Connecticut is not among them.

Additionally, state's that have not enacted an open container law have three percent (3%) of their state's federal highway funds transferred from their highway construction budget each year until a law is passed; funds that are redirected for alcohol impaired driving countermeasures and enforcement of drunk driving laws. A study found a 5.1 % decrease in fatal crash rates (among all drivers) attributable to open container laws. A second study found that an open container law has a significant deterrent effect against drinking and driving.

I strongly urge the committee to bring Connecticut up to speed with proactive drunk driving measures and pass an open container law. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,


Michelle Cruz, Esq.
State Victim Advocate